

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks at an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Phone Bank for Georgia Democratic Senatorial Candidate Raphael G. Warnock in Boston, Massachusetts

December 2, 2022

The President. Thank you, pal. Please, please, please, please sit down. Hey, guys, how you doing? Please. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Well, I came up here—I—years ago, when I was a kid, I lived in Boston for a little over a year and a half. My dad worked at the shipyard during the war, a little—actually, after, but—anyways, to make a long story short.

And you know, the reason Marty didn't come up is because I didn't let him. [*Laughter*] No, no. I said last night—I was with him—I said: "Marty, come on. Why don't you fly up with me tomorrow?" And he has something doing with—going on with young kids. He has like 110 kids in Washington doing something today. He said, "If I come up"—he said, "They'll never let me come back if I leave all these kids here."

But at any rate, what I really want to find out is how y'all are going to talk to those folks down in Georgia. I mean, they're—you're getting on the phone and say—I keep kidding Marty—

[At this point, the President imitated a Boston accent.]

—Marty Walsh. Well, you know, you still park car—park cars in car barns up here. And you know, down there, they don't have—they have barns, but they don't have cars. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, all kidding aside, what you're doing really makes a gigantic difference. And this is—as Elizabeth can tell you, it's not a joke. Thank you for waving.

As that—I wouldn't be standing here without the IBEW. That's not hyperbole. That's—that's the God's truth.

And you know, when—one of the things that this guy and I—our whole careers have been about is making sure ordinary families have a fighting chance—just a shot. My dad used to say everybody deserves just a little bit of breathing room. Everybody deserves to be treated with respect.

And we, all three of us—when we served in the Senate together and now as President and two Senators, we really do believe that, you know, the middle class—I'm tired of trickle-down economics, where the—[*applause*]*—no, no, for real.*

It works well for the wealthy, and, every once in a while, a middle class person gets lucky. But I was determined, my whole career and this time when I ran with your help—is to make sure that we built this economy from the middle up, out, and—the bottom up and the middle out.

Because when the middle class does well, the poor have a shot and the wealthy do very well. They don't have any problems. They don't have any problems. And the middle class is what built this country. But you built the middle class. Not a joke. Not a joke. Not labor—without the union movement, there would be no middle class. That's what makes us the most unique countries in the world. And so I just want to say thank you for all you've done and all you continue to do.

And look, folks, this race in Georgia—this is the second time there's been a runoff in 2 years here—is really, really critical. As both your Congressmen—both your Senators can tell you that,

you know, when you have 50—a vote of 50/50 in the Senate—the good news for that is, Vice President, every time she votes, she wins. So—but you know, that means you've got 50 "presidents." Any one could decide to change the direction of the country. And we're a diverse party. And—but we still have all stuck together on the major, major issues.

And one of the things that we need—we need that 51st vote. I know—I know Reverend Warnock well. First and foremost, he's a man of—and I know you know this too, but I wanted to emphasize it. I measure the people I work with based on their character—based on their character.

You know, when I got elected when I was 29 years old to the Senate—I come from a family that lived in a three-bedroom home—a nice home in a neighborhood with four kids and a grandpop living with us in a split-level home.

So we weren't poor, but we weren't—everything—you know, at the end of the month, if gas prices had gone up 10 cents, we would have been in real trouble. Not a joke. Was the things we—discussed at the kitchen table. My dad used to say, as I said, everybody—every family—needs just a little bit of breathing room and be treated with dignity.

And one of the things about Warnock is, he has real character. He's a truly decent, honorable man. And when I got elected people used to come to me—because I got elected and beat someone in the middle of it, when Nixon won my State by, at that time, it was by 64 percent. And I won by 3,100 votes. We used to be a red State when I started in the State of Delaware.

And people would say: "What's the secret? I want to run. What's the most important thing for me to know?" What these two people know: what you're willing to lose over. What are you willing to lose over? If you don't know what you're willing to lose over, you don't have a principle to know why you're running. Go do something else. It'd be a hell lot easier. You can do better, and you'll—a lot less grief.

But here's what—Warnock knows what's worth losing over. He's not going to compromise on something that's a matter of principle for him. And he has real character. Real character. And we all got to know him. They've worked with him in the Senate, and I got to know him by campaigning the first time with him and going up and down Georgia with him.

And so, folks, this is a guy who needs our help. And I think, you know, we have a chance to do something that I don't think—my mentor when I got started in public life was Teddy Kennedy. Not a joke.

Audience member. Yeah! [*Inaudible*]

The President. No—no, he was though. For real. When I got elected, I was—as I said, I got elected on November the 3d. And on November 18, I—December 18, I was down in Washington, and I was hiring staff. I hadn't turned—I'd just turned 30. I just wasn't eligible to be sworn in until I got to be 30. And I got a phone call saying my wife and daughter had just been killed and my two sons were not likely to live. A tractor trailer broadsided them and killed them.

But here's my point: I had people—there were five Senators, led by Teddy Kennedy, who came to my rescue—not a joke—who insisted that I—I didn't want to be sworn in. I didn't want to be part of it. I wanted—just wanted to—I didn't see how I could be a dad and a senator at the same time.

And Teddy and then another Senator named Fritz Hollings from South Carolina and another senator named Tom Eagleton from Missouri—five of them got together and said: "Just come and stay. Just stay for 8 months. Help us organize." Well, I was so stupid, I didn't realize we already had 58 United States Senators. They didn't need me to organize anything, but they kept with me the whole time.

That's the kind of guy Warnock is. That's the kind of guy Warnock is. He doesn't walk away from people. He doesn't walk away from the people.

And, folks, people—things are beginning to change. South—excuse me, Georgia, when I got started, was as—we had Democratic Senators, but it was a very southern State, very—the things we care so much about—Massachusetts's agenda and Georgia's agenda was kind of different. But things are changing. They're changing in a big way.

And you know, this is not—this is not a referendum on Warnock. This is a choice, a choice between two men. One man who does not deserve to be in the United States Senate. There's lots of times both nominees deserve, one just better than the other. One doesn't deserve to be in the United States Senate based on his veracity and what he said and what he hasn't said. The other man is a really, truly decent, honorable guy.

So what you're doing makes a gigantic difference. For example, you know, I—looking down the list here, you know, we got—we—the—we're in a situation where we got the legislation passed that wouldn't have been passed were it not for this guy over here named Markey, and that is the Inflation Reduction Act. That—[*applause*]. No, no, but here's the point: Warnock helped you. He helped. Warnock got engaged. And what it was is the greatest investment—the greatest investment—in environment and jobs of anything ever written. Two—three hundred and sixty-eight billion dollars.

You know, and it means a great deal. It makes a great deal of difference. And by the way, your international president, the reason—I remember I got in trouble for not introducing my—even though I've been deeply involved in environmental issues for my whole career. I was getting beat up because I hadn't announced it yet, because I didn't want—I wanted—wasn't going to do anything until I had labor with me.

And labor sat down, and all of a sudden, everybody figured out, you know, we're going to put in 550,000 charging stations. And guess who's putting them in?

Audience members. We are!

The President. You. No, I'm serious. I'm serious.

So, you know, it—did I say 500? It's not 500—[*laughter*]*—50, right now, to start off with. We're just getting going.*

But my point is, we've got a lot that we're going to get done for the American people. We've created more jobs because of your two Senators and because of Warnock than we've ever—than any President has in his first—almost 2 years. Over 10,500—I mean, 10,500,000 jobs. [*Laughter*] I—even it surprises me when I say the numbers. [*Laughter*]

But all kidding aside, things are moving. Things are moving. And so we came along, and we had the infrastructure bill. Do you know how much that legislation is? A trillion two hundred billion dollars. And it's remaking America.

I'm trying—for example, so far—so far—your State of Massachusetts has got \$3.4 billion toward that. Georgia, when you talk to folks in Georgia, they got \$4.8 billion so far. My point is, how can we compete with the rest of world unless we have the most modern infrastructure in the world? Roads, bridges, internet, the whole thing.

But it's all of you. It's labor that's getting this done. And so, when you're talking to these folks down in Georgia, let them know—let them know—how important it is for their jobs. For example, the—your two Senators came along with Warnock, and we decided we were going to pass the thing that had to do with building semiconductors.

Well, guess what? We invented those suckers here in the United States of America. We modernized them. And then we lost—we paid no attention. We kept exporting jobs instead of product.

And now guess what? There's over—there's about \$300 billion committed to be invested in new factories. And by the way—[*applause*]. And by the way, one of the things that—of the—for example, out in—just in what I call the "fields of dreams," just outside of Columbus, Ohio, there's \$20 billion being invested by Intel out there.

Well, guess what? Of those jobs—there's 12,000 of them building the facilities, 5,000 permanent jobs. The average salary in those—for those jobs: \$128,000. And guess what? You don't need a college degree. You don't need a college degree.

So my point is—I'm sorry to go on, but it really matters whether we continue to control the United States Senate in a way that—where you're not going to be able to have anybody hold us up and not do certain things. And Warnock is the real deal. He's the real deal.

And like I said, it's not a referendum: to like Warnock and what's happened and not happened. It's a choice between Warnock and Herschel Walker. Now that they found out—I'm not positive, I think I'm right about this—they found out that he takes—he uses his—to get a major tax cut—his primary home was in Texas.

Audience member. In Texas.

The President. I don't know the last time anybody won a seat in the United States Senate from Massachusetts living in Maine. [*Laughter*] But maybe. I don't know.

Well, look, I'm taking too much of your time, but it really matters. These calls really matter. And today I found out from my staff that this morning there's been a higher turnout, in terms of turnout, of any time at this stage of the game, early—in early voting. And the early voting looks good for us.

But last point I'll make is, you know, one of the things that a lot of people thought that maybe my talking about democracy being at risk—and I made that speech down in Independence Hall, then I made one not too long before this last election.

Well, guess what? There are over 330 Republicans running from [for; White House correction] office who denied the election was legitimate, denied that I got elected President, wanted to make sure the States and local officials could determine who the electors were that go to determine who votes for the President of the United States the ultimate decision.

And we've talked a lot about it, all three of us. And what happened was people began to realize, 70 percent of the American people were worried about: Is democracy still functioning? Is it still working? Is it going to be square?

And so we started electing—spending money electing State auditors, State secretaries of state, the local people who determine whether or not the votes count. And that's at stake in Georgia too. And so we need to have—make sure we have Warnock elected. We need to make sure.

And he—by the way, he's pro-union. I can't think of anything he hadn't voted for with us. There may be something. I—you know, I know it's a problem, because they're running against him, saying he votes 98 percent of the time with Joe Biden. [*Laughter*] I wouldn't tell them that on the phone.

But—[*laughter*—but—so, anyway, thank you for what you're doing. Keep it up. Just keep it going. We have to win this election. It will give us 51 votes. And that changes the dynamic of anybody being able to say they want to change what we're going to do.

It also is going to bring along some Republicans. And the reason it is: Republicans are having what we Catholics call an "epiphany." [Laughter] They're—some of them are, because they're realizing that—you know, we've all three had friends in the Senate who are Republicans, who privately tell us they'd like to be able to vote with us, but they're afraid to do it, because they're afraid to get, in fact, primaried and they'll lose their race. Well, it's not particularly courageous, but it's a reality.

If we have 51 votes and we don't need anybody and it's going to pass anyway, it's a lot easier to say, "Well, I voted for it anyway; it was going to pass" than it is when your—when you're—you're the deciding vote. So there's a lot going on, a lot you can do to help make sure we get—continue this path.

And like I said, we've created real jobs—good-paying jobs—jobs that people can, you know, live a life on and, as my dad would say, at the end of the month, have just a little bit of money left over after you pay all your bills.

One of the things we've done, with the leadership of your Senators: We're in a situation now where, beginning January 1, people—you know anybody who needs insulin for diabetes? Well, guess what? Instead of paying \$400 for a shot of insulin, it's going to be \$35 max you can pay. And by the way, they're still going to make a lot of money. It costs them 10 bucks to make it; another, probably, 4 bucks to package it; and they've been charging \$4- to \$800 for it.

So we're changing lives—people's lives. So much we're doing. And, again, it's not anything particularly noble; it's just simply the right thing to do. Right thing to do.

And I said the reason why people have a middle class life is because of unions. And last thing I'll say: You know, I get criticized. They say, "Well, Biden is pro-union. He's so—talks about it so much." I talk to corporate America about pro-unions. I talk to the Business Roundtable about why.

And here's the deal: I pointed out that it may cost more to have an IBEW union worker put in an electric facility. That's going to make it—it's going to cost you less in the long term because they're the best in the world. [Applause] No, no, no. Not a joke. Not a joke.

It will last longer. I really mean it. Not a joke. The best in the world. In the long run, it's cheaper—cheaper—than having somebody who does it half—not such a great job. [Laughter] I'm looking at my guys over there. [Laughter]

Anyway, thank you, thank you, thank you. Keep it up. Call, call, call. It ain't over until it's over, so let's wait until the last vote is in.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 103. In his remarks, he referred to Lou Antonellis, business manager, IBEW Local 103, who introduced the President; Sen. Elizabeth A. Warren; and Lonnie R. Stephenson, international president, IBEW. He also referred to his brothers James and Francis and sister Valerie Biden Owens.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Georgia Democratic senatorial candidate Sen. Raphael G. Warnock at International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers phone bank in Boston, MA.

Locations: Boston, MA.

Names: Antonellis, Lou; Biden, Francis W.; Biden, James B.; Biden, R. Hunter; Harris, Kamala D.; Markey, Edward J.; Owens, Valerie Biden; Stephenson, Lonnie R.; Walker, Herschel; Walsh, Martin J.; Warnock, Raphael G.; Warren, Elizabeth A.

Subjects: Broadband and wireless technologies; Economic improvement; Electric vehicle charging infrastructure, improvement efforts; Georgia, runoff senatorial election; Georgia, senatorial runoff election; Household income and wages; Infrastructure improvements; Insulin cost controls; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); Job creation and growth; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Massachusetts, Democratic Party events; Massachusetts, President's visits; Secretary of Labor; Semiconductor manufacturing; Vice President; Voter participation.

DCPD Number: DCPD202201093.